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Testimony Before the Assembly Committee on Judiciary and Ethics February 24, 2009 Assembly Joint Resolution 15

I want to thank Chairman Hebl for scheduling Assembly Joint Resolution 15 for a public hearing. I greatly appreciate the willingness of the Committee to listen to the testimony you will be hearing today.

Current federal law requires Wisconsin courts to suspend the motor vehicle operating privilege of a person, including a juvenile, if the person is convicted of any drug violation. In 2007 over 11,000 revocations or suspensions were due to drug convictions. That means that over 11,000 Wisconsin residents were unable to transport themselves or their families to work or school or the grocery store, or anywhere else for an infraction that had nothing to do with their ability to safely operate their vehicle on our roadways.

The federal law allows states to opt out of this mandate and instead make the suspension discretionary with the court and 37 other states have already invoked this opt out provision. Passage of this Joint Resolution in conjunction with Assembly Bill 61, which is also before your Committee today, will prevent Wisconsin from facing any financial penalty for opting out of this mandate. Moreover, Wisconsin would be giving 11,000 people the possibility of maintaining a valid driver's license and in doing so would be providing them access to increased opportunities. Assembly Joint Resolution 15 in combination with AB 61 will help those who are trying to rehabilitate their lives to move forward and become more productive members of society.

A 2006 study conducted by the University of Wisconsin Milwaukee Employment and Training Institute reported that 89,489 Milwaukee County residents, mostly young and poor, are under driver's license suspension or revocation. Most of these people's licenses have been suspended for reasons other than traffic offenses.

Most jobs around the state are contingent on an employee's ability to drive. For hundreds of thousands of people in Wisconsin, losing their license and losing their job is the same thing. This is all the more true for those convicted of drug offenses, men and women already laboring under debilitating addictions and the stigma of criminal records. To strip them of their driving privileges—at the moment when they most need the stability and support that a job and a wage can bring—is an invitation for them to fail in the rehabilitative process.

The facts show, incontrovertibly, that our current policy of suspending licenses drives people to unemployment and, frequently, to crime. We must ask if we are truly better off for doing so. I don't believe we are.

I thank the committee for your time and consideration of this matter. I am happy to answer any questions Committee members may have.